

The next meeting is January 8, 2008



Town of Wenham
Wenham Issues of Social Service Housing
Meeting of Tuesday, December 4, 2007 ~ 3:30 PM
Senior Center, School Street

Present: Susan Harnisch, Chair; Ann Mulry- Shaw; Don Luxton; Don Killam; Sue Bannon; Susan Carp; Margaret Scoglio; Cal Perkins; Tom Tanous; Pat Purdy (3:39 pm)

Not Present: Jack Hauck

Also Present: Catherine Tinsley, Secretary

Abbreviations used:

WISSH - Wenham Issues of Social Service Housing

BOS – Board of Selectmen

HH – Habitat for Humanity

Public information provided:

Agenda

Ms. Harnisch called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

Susan Harnisch - WISSH Coordinator

Ms. Harnisch reported the following:

- ❖ WISSH Account balance: \$22, 385.48
- ❖ There were four requests for financial assistance in the month of November.
 - 224.2007 – Request for \$500.00 as partial payment for vehicle repairs.
 - 225.2007 – Request for \$500.00 toward fuel bill in arrears.
 - 226.2007 – Request for \$500.00 for payment of Kitchen stove.
 - 227.2007 – Request for \$500.00 for car payment in arrears. Although this was approved, the Committee identified their concerns about approving requests such as car payments. Discussion followed about providing this resident with additional resources that may be helpful.

The Committee talked about inviting Meg Alfani from HH of Cape Anne to attend a WISSH meeting to review and update with the Committee regarding proposed plans to build affordable housing on the Dearborn Land in Wenham. Mr. Tanous briefly reviewed that the proposal includes the town voting at the January (2008) Special Town Meeting to accept the money from Windover Development to purchase the Dearborn property in lieu of building affordable housing at their Main Street development, The Boulders.

It was noted that WISSH is involved because this is an affordable housing issue and that the Brady Funds may be assessable for a first time buyer's mortgage program.

HH has indicated that they will try to build one house a year with the exception of possibly digging all the foundations at the same time to maximize cost savings.

Ms. Harnisch and the Committee reviewed previous discussions regarding the bylaw that regulates the \$500.00 maximum limit that the WISSH Committee can authorize annually, per family for financial assistance; the \$500.00 has been in place since 1998.

The Committee went on to discuss the process that residents follow to apply for assistance, and the formula used by the Committee to approve the requests. This discussion included raising the dollar

amount given through assistance, changing the number of times per year that residents can receive assistance through WISSH, and approving these changes on an individual basis.

Alternate assistance programs were identified and it was suggested that this information be accumulated and is available to applicants.

The Chair responded to the Committee's concern that WISSH assistance can be misused by saying as the designated person who is in contact with the applicants, she feels that people are honest and in truly need of financial help. She added that if the process gets too "dehumanizing" people who really need assistance will not seek the help, which also concerned the Committee.

The Committee will put their suggested revisions in writing for discussion purposes and take this up at the next meeting.

Ms Harnisch briefly identified the following:

- Since 1998, 128 (\$500.00) requests have been granted for assistance.
- An Affordable Housing Master Plan Committee has been formed in Wenham.
- Jack Hauck has submitted his resignation from the WISSH Committee.
- That the Committee considers voting a co-chair person.
- Letters to residents for donations to WISSH were mailed November 19th.
- The First Church Grant was submitted in November; Last year WISSH received \$2,000
- After talking with Mr. Hogan, it was determined that due to privacy laws, there is no way to offer "free" Christmas trees to WISSH applicants.

Don Luxton informed the committee that he will not be available to attend meetings during the months of January, February and March.

4:26 pm Mr. Luxton made a motion to adjourn and it was unanimous to do so.